
RELATIONES INTERNATIONALES

The Methodology of Developing an International Cross-Cultural Diagnostic

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to synthesize the necessary methodological issues in international cross-cultural diagnosis. The global village of the millennium XXI cultural intermediary initiatives occurs everywhere, without producing a parallel reflection and clarification of its theoretical foundations. All over the world there is the possibility to experience cross-cultural training programs for mediators, as well as conventions for contracting so-called person liaison, “link-workers”. These experiences, otherwise commendable by their formative and practical aspect, are often lacking a theoretical foundation, so knowledge of cross-cultural methodology appears as a sine qua non condition for the success of such an approach (which is the hypothesis of this article). International cross-cultural diagnosis is precisely positioning specific aspects of global culture in order to be valued. The specific knowledge of global cross-cultural relations lies in discovering and correcting the major problems of collaboration as well as the professional necessity to know and better treat members of other international communities. The main objectives of this paper are a comparative analysis of cultural dimensions and to present some methods according to a logical system of organization strategies. In this second part of the article a special focus is on quantitative and qualitative approaches to cross-cultural research, the cultural metaphor and the advantages and problems in achieving a cross-cultural diagnosis.

Keywords: cultural metaphor; errors; cross-cultural knowledge; organization; battleground

“Culture is not an island of clarity in a jungle of meanings, but the jungle itself”

(A. Albright)

Quantitative and qualitative approaches to cross-cultural research: the international organizational culture can be seen differently by the researchers, given their research orientation (functionalist, which treats culture as an intrinsic part of that organization and the culture as a symbolic process of organizing and learning and not as an attribute of the organization).

Data processing and analysis is particularly important in cross-cultural diagnosis, research using combinations of techniques, tools and *qualitative* and *quantitative* methods that can be mixed using the triangulation method.

Quantitative research is based on reasoning and use measurement, quantification. It is subsumed under positivism, **Auguste Comte** in his *Cours de Philosophie positive* (1830-1842) made the apology for accurate knowledge of the facts by calling the methods of social sciences.

In terms of knowledge, the positivism promotes *methodological monism*, the unity of all the methods in research of every phenomenon, makes an ideal measurement of sciences and seeks to *explain the causes*, the hypothetical individual causes being subsumed under *general laws*. (Von Wright, 1993 p. 10, cited Chelcea 2001, p. 63)

Advantages of quantitative approach may be: give the economy time and systematic research provides strong support for accepting the results without consequences that may arise, reporting to enable application deduction theory. Quantitative analysis can be done by axiomatization, formalization, modeling, quantification, being a dominant deductive type. (Zaiț & Spalanzani, 2006, p. 148).

According to the definition proposed by **Pierre Paille** (which customizes the accents, not the defining notes), "*quantitative research refers to empirical research which follow some characteristics: it is done in a comprehensive vision, address the object of the study in a comprehensive measure, may include data that does not require quantification (qualitative method,) can analyze data qualitatively, without going to account exercises, and ultimately leading to a theory not a demonstration.*" (Paille, 1996, p. 196, cited Chelcea, 2001, p. 62).

Qualitative research can penetrate the intimidation of real or imaginary structures through interpretation, naturalistic explanation, understanding, comprehension, and understanding action involving its spirit as conceived subjectively, being dominant inductive. Reality is not seen as it is, but as our mind can grasp it. (Zaiț & Spalanzani, 2006, p. 148).

This concept prevails in Anglo-Saxon space in the late 60s as being opposed to the quantitative one, although these approaches should complement themselves for understanding much better the realities of their unity and complementarity.

The fact that qualitative research are flexible is because the researcher who's conducting the research don't refuse any set of methods and data in the field of ethno methodology, hermeneutics, cultural studies, sociological survey, participatory observation resulting that: *"the researcher covers an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary field and sometimes contra disciplinary and accepts not one but several paradigms appropriate convergent or even competing."* (Chelcea, 2001, p. 61).

Cross-cultural diagnosis predominantly used as qualitative research among its advantages include the fact that it is centered on the field as sources for obtaining data, the researcher having the main role in their collection, the result of his research being a process rather than a product. Also data analysis is inductive, focusing on particular phenomena, the language used is expressive and metaphorical, the persuasion being achieved by reasoning. Regarding criticism of this approach, the most common is how the researcher was able to capture the essence of the phenomena studied, and his study does not reflect its cultural heritage.

Table 1

Quantitative style	Quality style
Objective measurements of the facts	Social reality with cultural signification
Centered variables	Centered interactive process
Reliability is crucial	Authenticity is crucial
Free of values	Values are free and full of explications
Context-independence	Situational constraints
Many subjects	Few cases
Statistical analysis	Thematic analysis
The researcher is detached	The researcher is involved

(adapted from Neuman 1997, p. 14 cited Chelcea, 2001, p. 65)

By *triangulation*, called the mixing method, we understand a complex approach, which uses multiple types of approaches, many experts and several methods for the same reality.

M. Fortin established several types of triangulation: data triangulation by aggregation, community interaction, triangulation researchers; the triangulation of researchers, the triangulation of the methods, and triangulation of the theories. (Fortin 1996, as cited Zaiț & Spalanzani, 2006, p. 186)

The method chosen to achieve a cross-cultural diagnosis can be anything, but must necessarily take into account: the identification and collection of facts, their analysis, the theoretical generalization etc.

The method can be applied using appropriate research techniques and tools for the problem specific, if the method is general for research, techniques and tools are adaptable depending on the particular approach. Diagnostic models based on observable cultural aspects for an international level: any diagnostic cultural encounter some major problems, some of which are identified by **Cummings** and **Worley** (1994). Among them we find the multinational organizations subcultures, which may differ from each other, the weak link between a series of values and beliefs as well as the fact that for an outside observer the observation process is very difficult. (Cuming & Worley 1993 cited Huțu, 2007, p. 115).

Literature (Zammuto & Kratower 1991; Quinn & Spreitzer, 1991, Schwartz & Danis, 1984; Killman & Saxton, 1993) has established a series of methods and techniques widely used in cultural diagnosis. The first time it is recommended to apply an iterative process of questions on subjects inside and outside of an organization, and conclusions about the cultural organization are established after the process. Responses must be clear and must be offered by standard tools (questionnaires, surveys, etc.) and the culture description must be made in terms of culture managerial behavior.

The researcher Daft R. L (1995) identified the following aspects of its culture by analyzing the effects observed.

Rites and ceremonies are actually planned activities that exemplified the role of organizational values, to create links between staff, to celebrate subjects etc.

Rites of passage are held at the promotions, retirements, etc.

Rites of renewal remodel the structure of the organization (e.g. annual competitions).

Rites of integration are designed to form an attachment to the organization, a good example in this respect is to commemorate together the Christmas holidays, Easter, etc.

The stories are based on real events and present state of things in the organization, some of them relate to *heroes* (successful people), others to legends (embellished with details of historical events), and some are part of myths which have no real reason, but are supported by values of the organization.

The symbols refer to the organization's deepest values.

Language (jargon, slogans, metaphors) supports the values of the organization (Daft, 1995. cited Huțu, 2007, p. 117)

G. Morgan (1989) recommends a structured questionnaire to conduct a cross-cultural diagnosis using surface elements. Among the most revealing questions include: What are the common practices (customs, ceremonies) and which is their role?, What kind of stories, myths are listened inside of the organization?, What kind of material events (objects, buildings, etc.) can be identified in organization's culture? (Daft, 1995. cited Huțu, 2007, p. 117)

Sherman and Bohlander (1992) consider the shape of cultural audit as being the best suited to achieve a cross-cultural diagnosis. The audit of organizational climate is structured on the physical environment, technological, social, economic, political environments.

Drennan D. (1992) also proposes an internal audit organization's approach, the factor of influence that shape the organizational culture and goals to be pursued constantly by the manager, who has the role to create a team spirit among employees.

Deal and Kennedy (1982) consider cultural diagnosis structures from the perspective of the organization's external environment and organizational climate. Internal environment regarded from outside refers to the physical environment, how to welcome the foreigners, what the company officials say about organization's culture. From the inside the diagnosis is a difficult process because of the inherent subjectivity that occurs between members of that organization. (Huțu, 2007, pp. 120-122).

Cultural Metaphor: critical approach is always more productive when it looks like there is only one truth, a scholastic *summa veritas* in understanding social, cultural, economic, phenomena etc. The real challenge is to accept that *all organization management theories are based on implicit metaphors persuades us to act on situations in ways biased* and we must learn to embrace different perspectives because there can be no single metaphor to give us a point of comprehensive view and there can be no correct theory to organize everything we do. (Morgan, 1998, pp. 9-10).

Metaphors teaches us how to behave with paradoxes and complexity of international specific, they are useful from several perspectives. By using metaphor and become aware of the fragility of our way of thinking subjectivity, the practical importance of the metaphor refers to the fact that once we have acquired the ability to use them, although they have a limited capacity to explain, we will use as starting points for explaining and discovering new perspectives.

As in the *Myth of the cave* in **Plato**, metaphor teaches us that the world is not necessarily what we think, opening new perspectives for us to understand the complexity of organizational reality.

The cultural metaphor helps companies to understand the societies as cultural phenomena. “*When we see organizations as cultures, we see that small societies with their own values, rituals, ideologies and characteristic beliefs*” (Morgan, 1998, p. 111).

Organizational metaphor implies a fine spirit of analysis, because it focuses on the more subtle manifestations of organizational behavior, which are reported in the meanings they give actors, regardless of the place they occupy in the hierarchy.

Most of those who consider the phenomenon as a prerequisite study supports the idea that people's lives in organizations depends on their ability to make sense of things, “*and to truly understand what happens in organizations is important to study the expressive aspects of participation, which are equally important, if not more important than structured.*” (Vlăsceanu, 1999, p. 48)

For Grant and Oswick (1996) working with metaphors as part of cross-cultural diagnosis involves: “the ability to simultaneously pursue both literal and symbolic communication”. For these authors symbolic metaphorical, communication, form a way of self expression as well as situations in which the subject may not be aware

or not able to express them analytically or literally. (Grant & Oswick, 1996, cited Huțu, 2007, p. 124).

Meyerson and Martin (1987) identified three perspectives of organizational culture approach. The first perspective, unitary or integrative perspective defines organizational culture in terms of values shared by all members of the organization. In this case the metaphor is used especially considering that cultural elements have a single interpretation, which belongs to leaders (this metaphor is centered on the study of myths, symbols, ceremonies and rituals as coherent cultural expressions).

In the work *In Search of Excellence*, Tom Peaters and Robert Waterman consider that “successful organizations are those that have managed to build strong culture by emphasizing a handful of values, norms and ideas usually induced by all the leaders and valued members of the organization” and Charles Handy argues that “the power of a culture determines the strength of the organization, but this power must be built patiently over the years by the dominant groups in the organization” (Peaters, Waterman, 1982; Handy, 1983 cited Vlăsceanu, 1999, p. 49)

Yet no matter how strong is a culture, if it does not fit the specific structural characteristics of the organization, is more likely to lose any relevance in it.

The second perspective is called *the perspective of differentiation and of multiple significances* and it studies the lack of consensus and study of some parts or subunits of the organization, stressing however consensus within subcultures. While it is impossible to find the same culture manifested in all sectors of the organization, this can occur for those groups or subgroups that share common values. This shows the existence of different cultures, leading to organizational conflicts.

“When individuals are away from the original groups, thus changing mix start groups or subcultures where dystonia is the ambiguity that is in prospect for change.” (Vlăsceanu, 1999, p. 50).

Ambiguity perspective is based on the fact that the meanings that people give things always change, being in constant motion. This is due to the problems, situations, people's mentality and organizational life cycles. Thus any organization is always dominated by a change, even though, so often, it is slow.

Because individuals and groups adapt constantly facing situations and relationships depend on the agreement of the participants, this view has been called *a negotiated order* (Fine, 1984, cited Vlăsceanu, p. 51).

Cultural metaphor provides a perspective to understand what life is like inside of an organization, behind each structure being a cosmos of meaning that determine relationships. Metaphor also provides an important tool to understand the role that it plays the system of beliefs, values, ideologies, etc. for an organizational reality.

The fact that the system of values, beliefs of a group is not a given, involves the manager to realize that the new may be maintained and strengthen a culture or to alter it. Most relevant lesson offered by cultural metaphor to this manager is as follows: *“adopting a strategy of organizational change requires a subtle approach aimed at the general direction of events or the future organization and cannot ignore the collective ethos as the basis for change.”* (Vlăsceanu, 1999, p. 52)

Advantages and problems in achieving a cross-cultural diagnosis: in carrying out any methodological approach there are some unresolved issues which would lead to obstruction of the whole research approach. As an oriental saying goes *“hangman and the cross are made of the same wood”* is positive, but critical to the diagnosis method.

Nicolescu and Verboncu Professors have in their studies some of the advantages of using a systematic method of diagnosis.

The first advantage would be to ensure the necessary foundation to develop and implement an organization's development programs. They also prevent the occurrence of major disruptions, identify causes of the problem because since infancy. Through rapid diagnosis it amplifies the potential of the organization by acting on the causes of strengths.

Diagnosis also provides the information absolutely necessary to adopt effective decisions.

However in any cross-cultural approach there is a bias of the researcher, a *“cultural irrationality”* in Hall T. or a *“cultural unconscious”* described by Jung which: *“limits perception and vision of reality bringing them each time to what know, we have given, or we want. Analysis of a culture as action in a cultural environment depends to a significant degree of what is preserved voluntarily or involuntarily in us getting results and cause such marked rather than the*

subjectivity of objectivity that we like to display and we would agree that image to induce others about us. This cultural bias is difficult to overcome, it manifested mainly through the subconscious” (Zait, 2002, pp. 72-73)

The research of the cross-cultural management of an international organization both political (NATO, UN etc.) and economic (Toyota, Nokia) is not at all an easy thing, the specialist must overcome many additional factors that make it difficult the work of specialists dedicated to their fields, trying to avoid errors.

Among the most frequently mentioned errors we find:

- *Specific errors* from incorrect definition of a problem and incorrect choice of research variables (when data are collected from different cultures can drain time distance between them, cultural misunderstandings can arise when researchers come from different backgrounds, etc.).
- *Errors in estimation* come from the difference between the actual value of an observable phenomenon and its value.
- *Errors in employment* arise when the researcher does not include all items not covered or exclude elements from different cultures.
- *Selection errors* leading to problems of representativeness (quantitative and qualitative) research results.
- *Measurement errors* are errors down the effect of scales to be used in research of mathematical breach.
- *Errors resulting from assuming the explanation* of universality and affects external and internal validity of field studies.
- *Causal interference errors* are due to not taking into account the phenomenon of *randomization* (random character) and go to a national disability studies.
- *Errors in assuming universality* require researchers to identify any factor that could affect research results in terms of study results. (Zait, 2002, pp. 290-292).

These errors are represented summarized in the following table:

Table 2

Class of errors	Type of errors	Causes and effects of errors
Errors in defining	Specificity errors	non-equivalences specific to the conceptual errors functional non-equivalences the inclusion of irrelevant variables erroneous causal
Errors in estimation	Classification errors	failure to list all specific elements of the population studied the inclusion of elements belonging to other populations
	Sampling Errors Measurement errors	sampling errors wrong design of scales untying the mathematical properties of the scales invalidated tools misuse of tools non-equivalences of instrument making non-equivalences of responses non-equivalences of language management non-equivalences
Errors in explaining	Causal inference errors Errors in assuming universality	internal disability external disability

(adapted from Cavusgil & Tas, 1997, cited Zai, 2002, pp. 292-293)

A number of ways to avoid errors are encountered in the works of other researchers who have dealt with the phenomenon of cross-cultural.

Among other additional factors affecting the work we include:

Defining the problem. The terms used in research, especially the word “culture” has many interpretations. Also the terminology used in the questionnaire may be subject to interpretation. It may occur the following problem: “is the question that determines the culture, or culture determines the question?” Translation issues add difficulties, too during this first process. (Henry, 1990, p. 32 as cited in Jones M.L., p. 11).

Methodological simplicity. Any failure leads to bias and inaccuracies in the implementation of an approach. A common error in many researchers is those that

are based on ethnocentric model, it occupies only a small part of the vastness of research methods. Another research question is what the training of researchers is, a research only from the perspective of a discipline is not recommended, and solid foundation cannot be achieved only with one approach.

However, according to Nicolescu and Verboncu limits of the method is just about the effort that it involves considerable use. For better efficiency, it is recommended to be used in all organizations, at least once a year.

Conclusions: economic revolution due to globalization, large corporations and international organizations forced to seek new areas to bring economic stability to the exchange with a high risk factor. People from different areas and cultures began to go elsewhere, thus renewing the vision of international realities. This led to a mixture, to a mixing with other people from other countries, holders of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

According to *social determinism* (it claims that there is a causal relationship between socio-historical and geo-physical characteristics of a people), regional values of individuals marked how they interact in the international environment, both political and business.

Exposure to a new culture and new beliefs and customs of a people, can lead to many differences and misunderstandings, making the international relations environment uncomfortable, a real economic *battleground* (ground fighting). To overcome this *status-quo*, the need for cross-cultural initiations became essential.

Internationalization and globalization lead to the need to identify local cultural specificity and thus the development of cross-cultural management. Beyond the particular management style (euro management, American, Japanese, Nordic) it is observed clearly a globalization management in legislation, policy development, legal and administrative regulations.

When it comes to cross-cultural we always consider an approach, we cannot speak of a cross-cultural change. Cultural diagnosis is different from a diagnosis of enterprise, international diagnostics refers to countries, regions, and at enterprise level it is made an organizational diagnosis.

Cross-cultural diagnosis is a fundamental reference for the organization's management (it helps us to build the organizational culture, to fix our objectives, to know the one who addresses us and to deliver him what is asked from us. The

organizational culture always takes into account the national cultures from the part of the management. Research must be done through methods or techniques that allow processes to observe the essence of economic, social, and psychological processes.

The diagnostic is intended to identify key strengths and weaknesses of the sector under investigation, and concludes with some recommendations aimed at eliminating the causes of weaknesses and implementation of those leading to success.

The interest in cultural diagnosis, diagnosis by developing cross-cultural knowledge, we suggest finding the most optimal solution to increase the effectiveness of the current global businesses, both at monoculture level and at cross-cultural, too. Interaction between cultures is as complex as that of the human beings based primarily on a strong mutual relationship.

Very often we meet some erroneous opinions and false judgments about culture and religion of a people from a particular country. There is a tendency to generalize the characteristics of an individual from another culture to a whole people.

The nature or individual characteristics do not represent those of the collective (masses) of a country. Judging a culture or a religion according to the characteristics of a single subject is a totally wrong approach, cross-cultural analysis serving to change that. We believe that cross-cultural diagnosis is necessary because it warns that there is not a single perspective, or a single perspective in the analysis of international economic phenomena. Each new research, analysis or practical research can provide new perspectives, new realities and new certitudes.

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